

Speech by Ambassador Pelle Enarsson at EU Day Celebrations, Juba 8th of May 2026

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the EU Compound! Welcome to celebrate the EU Day with us! I admit, we are one day before the real EU Day, the 9th of May, but we felt we didn't want to intrude on your weekend. My name is Pelle Enarsson, and I am the EU ambassador here since September last year. Welcome again.

Now, why do we really celebrate Europe Day on 9th May? Many believe it is related to the end of World War 2. But in Europe we celebrate the end of World War 2 on 8th of May.

No, we celebrate the EU Day on 9th of May, not because a war ended, but because peace started. The largest peace project on earth was launched with the Schuman Declaration on 9th May 1950 which proposed a European Coal and Steel Community. Less than a year after it was established.

Robert Schuman was an amazingly visionary leader. He said already in 1951 when his plan was adopted, that *Europe will not be made all at once or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.*

Imagine former bitter enemies that used exactly that coal and steel to fight each other, coming together and agree to share those resources and intertwine their future.

Look at where Europe stands today.

A powerful single market that also transforms markets around the world. A common currency, the EURO, that is gaining in strength and becoming a stable reserve in an unpredictable global economy.

Political and legal stability and respect for the rule of law and human rights and freedoms like nowhere else.

Soft power in diplomacy and a win-win approach to cooperation. Not coercion. Not extraction. And with a superpower – both multilateral and bilateral action at the same time.

I want to recognize our Member States present: France, Germany and the Netherlands. We call ourselves Team Europe.

An innovation hub that is leading the way forward in addressing climate change, advances in life sciences and technology through strategic, long-term collaboration between the European Commission and public-private partnerships called the Horizon Europe. Students from all over Africa come to study and do research in Europe through our Erasmus+ program.

A security powerhouse through the common security and defence policy and the European Facility for Peace. We not only support Ukraine to hold fort against the Russian war of aggression. We train soldiers for the Somali National Army and the Central African Armed Forces as well as Quick Reaction Forces in Mozambique. We finance AU peace keeping missions.

With all this backing me up, I am proud to represent the EU here in South Sudan.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union has been a strong supporter of South Sudan even long before independence. In one of my first meetings here, the vice chancellor of Juba University told me about a campus for agricultural research on the other side of the Nile, built by EU in 1975. The structure is still there, but civil war and conflict has broken down the promise that was once given about an independent and rich agricultural future. The very house behind me, was an EU project site for tea plantations in Kapoeta also in the 1970-ies.

Today unfortunately we must invest most of our money in direct humanitarian and life saving activities. Nine out of twelve or thirteen million South Sudanese depend on external aid to survive day by day. The situation is created by continued conflict and instability, displacement, climate change and poor governance. This dependency on external aid is a disgrace to the years of fighting and human suffering to achieve independency. Or as President Salva Kiir Mayardit once expressed it himself: *There is no meaning of revolution unless it makes our people happy. Unless the masses of our people become prosperous.*

That is why the EU is emphasizing the need for political dialogue and peace. South Sudan needs peace. South Sudan needs peace and a transition to democracy by credible elections. South Sudan needs peace for development. The EU has been supporting the institutions of the peace agreement, the election preparations, the work on a new constitution, civic education, human rights activists and youth peace ambassadors. In all this work we coordinate closely with the African Union, IGAD and the neighbouring countries.

We also emphasize the need for the Government to invest more of its own resources on development and the social welfare of all South Sudanese. The financial allocation to health and education is under 1 percent of the state budget. The bulk of it goes elsewhere. And not necessarily for building peace. While the EU and others are picking up some of the bill for health and education.

We also continue to provide support to livelihoods of the ordinary people and the displaced. I just came back from Aweil in Northern Bahr El Ghazal where we officially opened a few roads that provides a lifeline to remote communities. 150 000 beneficiaries! What impressed me most was how the roads had changed the mindset of the farmers. Instead of farming just enough to survive, they had started to produce more. To sell on the market. To make their own money. Away from and despite of the politics of Juba.

The EU is also helping to plant the seeds for the future in South Sudan. We are supporting the power connector from Uganda to Juba. In five years, green electricity will power this place instead of diesel generators. Through support to conservation efforts, we help safeguard wildlife for future investments in the tourism industry.

This is only some of what we do. And we couldn't do it without our partners. I want to acknowledge all our friends from the UN, other international organisations, our local partners and civil society organisations. Thank you all for the hard work you do to deliver our programs.

It is also good to see some of our key interlocutors from the Government here. We have business partners here and media representatives. And of course, last but not least, all the colleagues from the embassies. Thanks all for coming!

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

South Sudan is at a precarious moment. There is a strong need for visionary leadership to bring the people of South Sudan together. You need to find your coal and steel.

When you do, we will be here to support your peace. To support South Sudan's people to become prosperous. As we have done in the past and we do now.

Thank you.